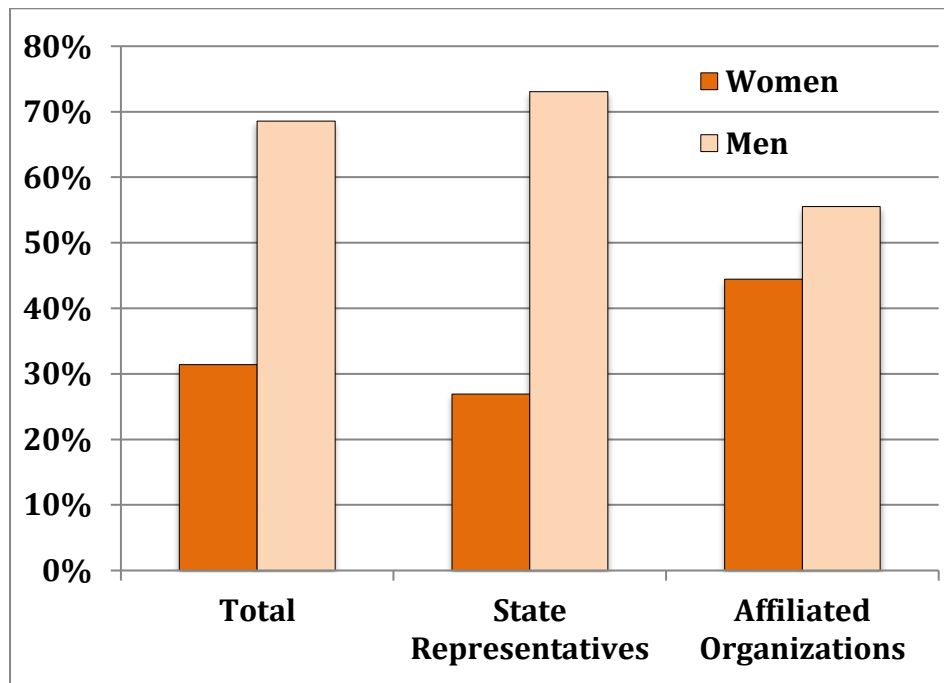


## Women in the AVMA's 2014 House of Delegates, with Some Government Comparisons

By Dr. Donald F. Smith and Julie Kumble  
July 31, 2014

In April 2013, we reported on the gender makeup of the AVMA's House of Delegates (HOD).<sup>1</sup> We thought readers might be interested in seeing an update of the current composition of this important volunteer legislative body of the veterinary profession.<sup>2</sup>

Graph 1 below shows that 23 (31.4%) of the 67 HOD delegates are women.<sup>3</sup> This is a higher proportion than we reported last year when women comprised 25% of the HOD delegates. The percentage of female delegates representing the 52 states (including Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia) is marginally lower (27.9%) and the percentage representing the allied organizations is 44.4%.



*Graph 1. Percentage of women and men delegates in current HOD (as of July 1, 2014) showing total percentage, and also segmented by those who represent states and those representing affiliated organizations.*

(Data from AVMA, [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org), July 1, 2014)

The proportion of women in the HOD does not represent the full story with respect to voting power, however. This is because the voting power for delegates representing state associations

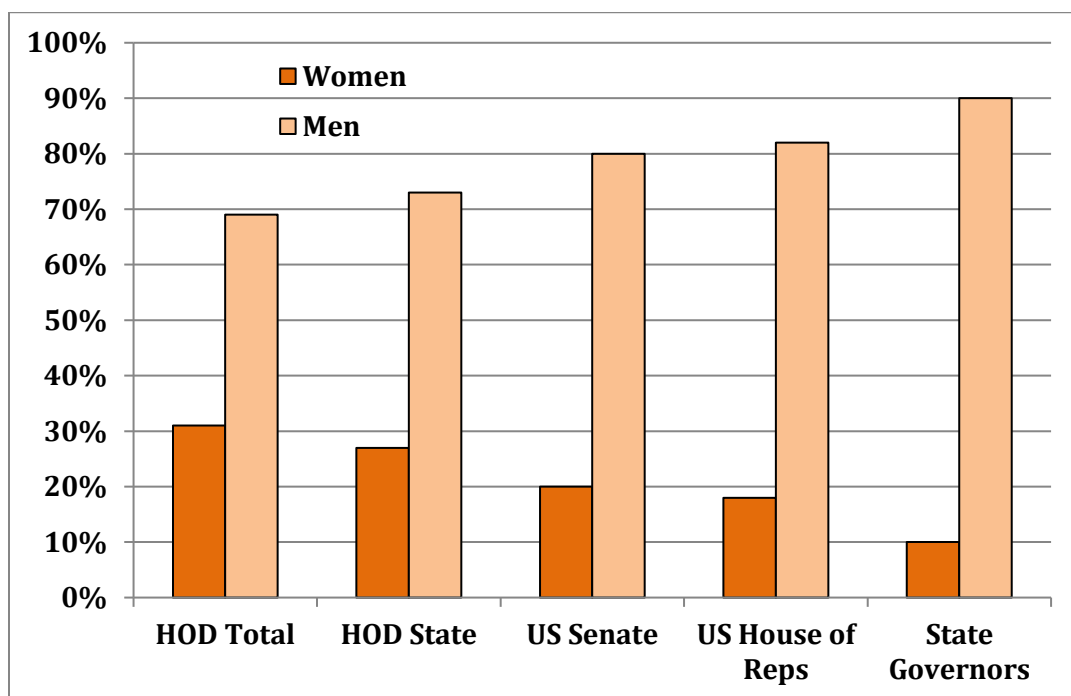
(including Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia) is weighted proportionate to the number of AVMA members in each particular state.

For example, delegates from the ten states with the most AVMA members carry approximately half of the total votes apportioned to all states. Because eight of these ten delegates are men (including the delegates from the four largest states), the weighting of male votes is disproportionately high compared to the total number of delegates.

Though the female representation of the allied organizations is higher (44%), the impact of their aggregate voting power is not realized proportionate to their numerical presence in the HOD because these organizations carry only two votes each. Therefore, in the aggregate, the affiliated organizations provide less than 10% of the total weighted voting power of the HOD, with the other 90% coming from delegates representing state associations.

This is not to diminish the substantial progress that has been made in women's representation on the HOD in the past year. Not only has the proportion of women delegates increased substantially, as noted above, but the gender ratio of the alternate delegates for the 10 largest states is now 50%. If some or all of these alternate delegates become delegates in the next few years, this by itself will have a substantial impact on the weighted vote of the body.

As in our 2013 story, we again match our HOD data with data from the US Congress. We have now added governors for one additional point of comparison.



*Graph 2. Percentage of women and men delegates in current HOD (as of July 1, 2014), and of three governing bodies (Senate, House of Representatives and Governorships).*

(Data from AVMA, [www.avma.org](http://www.avma.org), July 1, 2014, and other sources)

As noted in last year's article, many scholars recommend a minimum of 30% women in leadership positions to achieve a critical mass where they effectively influence policy and decision-making. Unlike in the US Congress and governorships, we have reached that 30% point in the HOD. Though we have not yet reached the threshold in weighted voting power within the HOD, we are optimistic about progress over the past year. This is a favorable sign in a profession that is now well over 50% women.

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, Donald F. and Julie Kumble. Women's Leadership in the U.S. Congress and the AVMA's House of Delegates: Exploring Parallels and Looking Forward. *Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine*, April 28, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> The House of Delegates met just prior to the AVMA Convention (July 24-25, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> This includes only delegates, not alternate delegates (alternate delegates are non-voting). The proportion of women among alternates is currently 34.1%.

#### KEYWORDS:

Women's Leadership in Veterinary Medicine  
History of Veterinary Medicine  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
House of Delegates  
Diversity  
Women in Congress

#### TOPIC:

Women's Leadership in Veterinary Medicine

#### LEADING QUESTION:

Has the number of women in the AVMA's House of Delegates increased in 2014?

#### META-SUMMARY:

The number of women is increasing in the AVMA's House of Delegates for 2014

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

**Dr. Donald F. Smith**, Dean Emeritus of the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, had a passion for the value of the history of veterinary medicine as a gateway for understanding the present and the future of the profession.

Throughout his many professional roles from professor of surgery, to Department Chair of Clinical Sciences, Associate Dean of Education and of Academic Programs and Dean, he spearheaded changes in curriculum, clinical services, diagnostic services and more. He was a diplomat of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons and a member of the National Academy of Practices. Most recently he played a major role in increasing the role of women in veterinary leadership.

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*Perspectives in Veterinary Medicine* is one of his projects where he was able to share his vast knowledge of the profession.

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